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transported Bolivian police and U.S. DEA agents on strike missions to locate and destroy illegal cocaine production laboratories. While this operation had limited success during that four-month period, it had virtually no impact on the international drug trade once the U.S. forces left country. An assessment of that operation leads to the conclusion that the introduction of U.S. military forces into the sovereign territory of a source country is neither an effective nor appropriate approach. A uniquely organized counterdrug security assistance program in two or three of the major drug producing/source countries, dedicated to a long-term commitment, may be a realistic approach to achieving a reduction of illegal drugs at the source.

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USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER

U.S. ARMY INVOLVEMENT IN COUNTERDRUG OPERATIONS -
A MATTER OF POLITICS OR NATIONAL SECURITY?

An Individual Study Project
Intended for Publication

by

Colonel Michael H. Abbott (Author)

Murl D. Munger
Project Advisor

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Michael H. Abbott, COL, AV

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Whether or not the U.S. Army should be involved in counterdrug operations is dependent upon whether the international drug traffic affects the national security of the U.S. and its allies. It doesn't take a great deal of research to realize that national security is indeed at risk because of terrorist actions directed against government, police, and military forces of our allies and because the cancer of corruption permeates these same organizations when influenced by the megabucks of drug traffickers. BLAST FURNACE was an operation conducted in Bolivia, July - November 1986, in which U.S. Army helicopters transported Bolivian police and U.S. DEA agents on strike missions to locate and destroy illegal cocaine production laboratories. While this operation had limited success during that four month period, it had virtually no impact on the international drug trade once the U.S. forces left country. An assessment of that operation leads to the conclusion that the introduction of U.S. military forces into the sovereign territory of a source country is neither an effective nor appropriate approach. A uniquely organized counterdrug security assistance program in two or three of the major drug producing/source countries, dedicated to a long term commitment, may be a realistic approach to achieving a reduction of illegal drugs at the source.

INTRODUCTION

On 15 July 1986, six U.S. Army Blackhawk helicopters from the 210th Combat Aviation Battalion, 193rd Infantry Brigade (Panama) deployed to Bolivia to conduct an operation never before done on a large scale by a U.S. Army combat unit. Their mission was to provide air transportation [at the direction of representatives of the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) contingent stationed with the U.S. Embassy in La Paz] to Bolivian counterdrug police forces (UMOPAR) as they sought to locate and destroy cocaine production laboratories. The U.S. Ambassador to Bolivia retained overall responsibility for the U.S. involvement in the operation. This JCS-directed operation, called OPERATION BLAST FURNACE, came just three months after President Reagan announced his administration was declaring a "war on drugs."

After four months of operations, although 22 cocaine labs had been discovered, no cocaine of any significance was seized, and no arrests were made. Task Force Janus returned home amid many accolades for a highly publicized, successful operation. Although illicit drug production in Bolivia was severely disrupted while the U.S. military was in country, it quickly returned to a near normal output once the Americans had gone home.

It was only a few days after the task force had departed Bolivia that a political cartoon appeared in one of the major U.S. newspapers. It showed the sky filled with U.S. helicopters leaving Bolivia while the caption between two of the pilots read "This reminds me of Vietnam. We go in with a large force, accomplish almost nothing, declare victory, then go home."¹ For this author, that one cartoon became the catalyst that generated over a year's worth of wrestling with a number of questions. Did BLAST FURNACE have any real significance? How do you define success in a counterdrug operation? Did BLAST FURNACE have any real connection to our own national security or was it just a trivial movement on a political chessboard? Should the Army be involved in counterdrug operations in the future or

should that remain the domain of civilian law enforcement agencies?

To focus some answers to these questions, this article will look at the magnitude of the drug problem and its relationship to national security, actions which led to the decision to launch BLAST FURNACE, and some key lessons learned during BLAST FURNACE. The final thrust of this analysis offers recommendations for a future U.S. Army role in the "war on drugs."

This author was the aviation battalion commander who deployed assets to Bolivia to conduct OPERATION BLAST FURNACE. The basis for this analysis is the personal experience of that operation and numerous interviews conducted with key personnel in the drug decision and policy arenas of the Office of the Vice President, Justice Department, Department of Defense, State Department, DEA, and the US Embassy, La Paz.

IS THERE REALLY A WAR OUT THERE?

When we use the term "war," we usually think of combat forces, either regular or irregular, engaged in a shooting competition directly related to the national security of one or more participants. Just what is the war on international drug trafficking and is there a threat to national security?

It is appropriate to start by looking at some facts about drug trafficking and the magnitude of this multi-billion dollar business. First, how bad is the use of illicit drugs in the United States?

- In March 1987, it was estimated that the number of users/addicts was: marijuana - 20 million, cocaine - 4 to 5 million, heroin - 500,000.²

- In terms of the dollar value of illegal drugs brought into the U.S. each year (some \$70 billion), narcotic drugs rank second to petroleum as the largest import.³ (And you thought our trade deficit was bad enough already!)

- U.S. consumption of cocaine is estimated at well over 70 tons annually, and DEA is seizing about 35-40 metric tons per year.⁴

- The number of cocaine users is estimated to increase at a rate of 10% annually.⁵

- U.S. resources dedicated toward combatting international drug trafficking: 1986 - \$60.2 million, 1987 - \$118.5 million, 1988 projected - \$98.7 million (likely to be changed due to budget cuts).⁶

Second, where are these drugs coming from?

- 100% of the cocaine and heroin and 85% of the marijuana consumed in the U.S. are imported.⁷

- The principal sources of the three major categories of illegal drugs are:⁸

Cocaine: Peru, Bolivia, Colombia

Heroin/Opium: Mexico, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan

Marijuana: Colombia, Jamaica, Belize, Mexico
(Some 15% of the marijuana consumed in the U.S. is grown domestically. Many non-producing countries sanction the active transshipment of illegal drugs through their country or are involved in drug money laundering activities.)

- 40% of the cocaine smuggled into the U.S. comes from Bolivia.⁹

- The primary single supplier to the U.S. of both heroin and marijuana is Mexico.¹⁰

- Gross production of coca in both Peru and Bolivia is estimated to have increased at an annual rate of 5-10% during this decade.¹¹

- Much of the marijuana grown within the U.S. is grown in our national parks, making identification of the grower difficult. Boobytraps have even been found in some of these areas.¹²

Third, the relationship between drug traffickers and terrorist/insurgent groups is one key factor linking drugs to national security. It is not an easy task to identify just how

these groups are related or how strong are their bonds. In Colombia, the insurgent organizations M19 and FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) have provided physical security to drug traffickers at their production facilities (cocaine laboratories, airfields, growing sites for coca and marijuana) in addition to being their trigger men to carry out reprisals against the government for their efforts to fight drug trafficking operations. There are believed to be similar links between terrorists and traffickers in Peru and other countries.

While the exact nature of these relationships may be unclear (are they simply a marriage of convenience at local levels, ie, trade-off of security for money, or are they well organized relationships at the national/international level for a common purpose?), the evidence is clear that they have had and continue to have a tremendous impact on the governments, economies, and societies of producing, supporting, and using countries alike.

One of the most publicized drug/terrorist powers is that in Colombia. In November 1985, some 60 members of M19 seized the Palace of Justice in Bogota. Their purpose was to destroy the records of some 200 key drug traffickers threatened with extradition to the U.S. and to show the Colombian government and people their inability to protect themselves from the terrorist activities of the M19. They took over 300 hostages, killed 11 justices and many other people. In 1986, traffickers/terrorists assassinated several Colombian journalists, the former commandant of the Special Anti-Narcotics Police, a Supreme Court justice, other judges, police officers, and private citizens.¹³ In 1987, an attempt was made on the life of the Colombian ambassador to Hungary. In early 1988, the Colombian Attorney General was assassinated. While the Colombian government has courageously stood up to be counted in its fight against the drug/terrorist conglomerate during this decade, there are some serious indications that their will to withstand the severe pressures may be eroding. In 1987, kingpen Jorge Ochoa was released from jail,

and the Colombian Supreme Court declared the treaty between the U.S. and Colombia, allowing the extradition of drug traffickers to the U.S., to be unconstitutional.

Over the last two years, both police and military helicopters in Colombia have been struck by hostile fire some 15 times while narcotics police, in 1986 alone, suffered 58 casualties among its force of 1500.¹⁴ Money and weapons are the primary payoff from the drug traffickers to the terrorist/insurgent organizations. Sometimes they are paid in cocaine, further complicating the problem as some terrorists allegedly become users themselves.

The relationship between traffickers and terrorists/insurgents is not always friendly. In the past year, there have been several exchanges of gunfire between the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and traffickers in Peru as well as similar incidents between traffickers and insurgents in Colombia,¹⁵ perhaps as a means of negotiating terms of extortion among criminals.

A second, and perhaps more important, threat to national security is the corruption of governments, police forces, and militaries as a result of the huge payoffs which traffickers are glad to provide in return for favors and protection. It is purported that some two years ago, the primary drug lord in Bolivia offered to pay off that country's national debt (over \$10 billion dollars worth) in return for freedom of action within Bolivia. While that offer may have been openly rejected, there is no doubt that collaboration with drug traffickers by some government officials, police, and military personnel is a serious problem. A U.S. journalist in Bolivia during BLAST FURNACE quoted a former Minister of Interior from a previous Bolivian government:

"The police are corrupt at every level. No wonder cocaine is not being seized. The traffickers almost certainly are being warned...If you notice, there haven't been that many arrests either. President Paz is quite serious but he isn't getting too much cooperation from the National Police. He

recently had to sack the Police Commanding General and the Chief of the Narcotics Squad in Santa Cruz for obvious corruption."¹⁶

There are many other ways in which national security is adversely impacted within the United States, both directly and indirectly. The actual use of drugs by military personnel has a direct effect on the readiness of U.S. combat forces. The impact on society in terms of the decay of morals, increased crime, breakdown of family value systems, and the flight of drug money out of the United States all have national security implications.

All of this lengthy background information has been to set the stage for understanding the seriousness of international drug trafficking and its impact on national security. To further the connection, it is appropriate to look at a definition of low intensity conflict from JCS Pub 1:

"Low intensity conflict is a limited politico-military struggle to achieve political, social, economic, or psychological objectives. It is often protracted and ranges from diplomatic, economic, and psycho-social pressures through terrorism and insurgency. Low intensity conflict is usually confined to a geographic area and is often characterized by constraints on the weaponry, tactics, and the level of violence."¹⁷

The influence of drug traffickers, combined with their ties to terrorist/insurgent organizations, on governments and economies, police and military, and the population as a whole, is indeed a form of low intensity conflict. It is a struggle waged by the drug dealers against the established government and society to achieve political, social, economic, and psychological objectives. It is clear that a war is going on, and the trafficker continues to keep the upper hand. And guess who funds both sides of this war? The U.S. government spends in the vicinity of a hundred million dollars annually to fight against the traffickers and to help some 100 countries to counter the threat.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the U.S. public spends some seventy billion dollars annually to support the international drug

network as consumers smoke, snort, and shoot themselves into oblivion.

In consideration of the threat, President Reagan signed a National Security Decision Directive (NSDD) on Narcotics and National Security, 11 April 1986. He directed a number of important actions, four of which are particularly key to this discussion:¹⁹

- Full consideration of drug control activities in our foreign assistance planning.
- An expanded role for U.S. military forces in supporting counter-narcotics efforts.
- Additional emphasis on narcotics as a national security issue in discussions with other nations.
- Greater participation by the U.S. intelligence community in supporting efforts to counter drug trafficking.

In the January 1988 issue of Military Review, focusing on the dimensions of low-intensity conflict and military operations short of war, MG Gordon R. Sullivan stated that "We must seek to define the role of the military in a sort of competition that uses force, but which, by its very nature, is dominated by nonmilitary considerations."²⁰ President Reagan's NSDD on Narcotics and National Security opened up a new challenge to the military as it now seeks to define its role in a competition dominated by nonmilitary considerations.

PAVING THE WAY FOR BLAST FURNACE

The Posse Comitatus Act of 1878 restricted the military from involvement in civilian law enforcement matters as a result of the use of and abuses by the Army while enforcing the reconstruction laws in Southern states.²¹ A hundred years later, in 1981, a change to Title 10, US Code, clarified the military's authority to participate in narcotics control operations in support of federal law enforcement agencies with the following limitations:²²

- The military may loan equipment, facilities, and people.
- Military people may operate military equipment used in monitoring and communicating the movement of air and sea traffic.
- Military personnel may operate military equipment in support of law enforcement agencies in an interdiction role overseas only if a joint declaration of emergency, signed by the Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, and Attorney General, states that a serious threat to U.S. interests exists.
- The military may not conduct searches, seizures, or make arrests (even when an emergency declaration is in effect).
- Use of the military cannot adversely impact on readiness.

While it may appear that this 1981 change to Posse Comitatus opened up the door to the military, it generally had the opposite effect in that the DOD often used the "readiness" caveat as a reason for staying out of the drug business. U.S. Representative Tommy Robinson (D-ARK), recognizing the severity of the drug trafficking problem and a reluctance on the part of DOD to be a full partner in countering it said "Without the military, we are not going to make a dent."²³

President Reagan's NSDD in April further clarified direct involvement of U.S. military forces by stipulating that, if used in an interdiction role overseas, they must be (1) invited by the host government, (2) coordinated by U.S. government agencies, and (3) limited to a support function.²⁴

Not long after the NSDD, a meeting of the National Drug Policy Board (chaired by the Attorney General) in which representatives from the National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (Office of the Vice President), Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (State Department), Drug Enforcement Administration (Justice Department), and the DOD Task Force on Drug Enforcement met to discuss doing something in either Colombia, Bolivia, or Peru.²⁵ Bolivia was picked for several reasons: (1) The president of Bolivia felt he was losing control of his country to drug traffickers. (2) Bolivia was on the verge

of being decertified by the U.S. government for failure to make any progress in drug eradication efforts. (3) Colombia and Peru each have an organic military capability to counter drug traffickers whereas Bolivia has neither the capability, money, nor know-how. (4) The terrorist threat in Bolivia was the least of the three countries. Simultaneously, key personnel in the U.S. Embassy, La Paz (Ambassador, Deputy Chief of Mission, Military Group Commander, DEA representatives), developed plans for use of the military in a combined, counter-drug operation and coordinated the concept with the government of Bolivia.²⁶ An operations concept and rules of engagement, refined in Washington, led to the signing of a joint declaration of emergency.

Vice President Bush personally provided the momentum to get the multiple departments and agencies united and moving in what was soon to become known as OPERATION BLAST FURNACE.²⁷

A NEW BEGINNING - BLAST FURNACE

BLAST FURNACE was not the first use of a military unit in a drug interdiction operation (Two USAF helicopters had previously supported DEA for a short period in the Bahamas as did two Army helicopters from TF 160), but it was the first publicized employment of a U.S. Army combat force on the sovereign soil of another country to conduct a combined counterdrug operation. For USSOUTHCOM and the 193rd Infantry Brigade (Panama), it was a short notice requirement with little information and lots of questions. It began with a coordination meeting in Panama, 5 July 1986, with the DEA representative and MILGROUP commander from the U.S. Embassy, La Paz. They originally envisioned 2-3 helicopters for a period of approximately 60 days to transport Bolivian narcotics police (UMOPAR) to some 56 targets (possible cocaine production laboratories). In order to provide for sustainability, security, operational flexibility, and a high probability of success, a self-contained task force package was developed that included six helicopters.

Task Force Janus, a joint organization consisting of approximately 170 personnel, had a brief mission statement: provide air transportation to Bolivian police, under the direction of DEA, in order to interrupt the production of cocaine for a period of 60 days. DEA was the operating agency, and TF Janus was in support. The U.S. Ambassador had overall responsibility for the program.

The deployment concept called for the Blackhawks to deploy via USAF C5 to Santa Cruz (the only C5 capable airfield) on 15 July 1986, reassemble, and self-deploy to a forward operating base (a drug trafficker's ranch confiscated by DEA/UMOPAR the previous year) nearly 400 miles to the north (See map, page 12). Two days later, the main body deployed via five USAF C130's to a Bolivian Air Force base at the city of Trinidad and established a rear operating base. When the C5 landed at Santa Cruz, a small crowd, to include both U.S. and Bolivian press, awaited their "low key" arrival. It is not known who leaked the deployment to the press, but it had a significant effect. The hope of gaining a few days of surprise operations before the drug infrastructure could figure out how to react to the U.S. military's presence was shattered.

It is estimated that some 200 traficantes fled to Panama and another 600 to Paraguay in a matter of days.²⁸ During the four months of operations to follow, never once was a strike force fired upon as it hit a potential lab site, nor were any traficantes found at actual coke labs. Had BLAST FURNACE taken place in Colombia, it is likely that a lab discovery would have been accompanied by a fire fight.

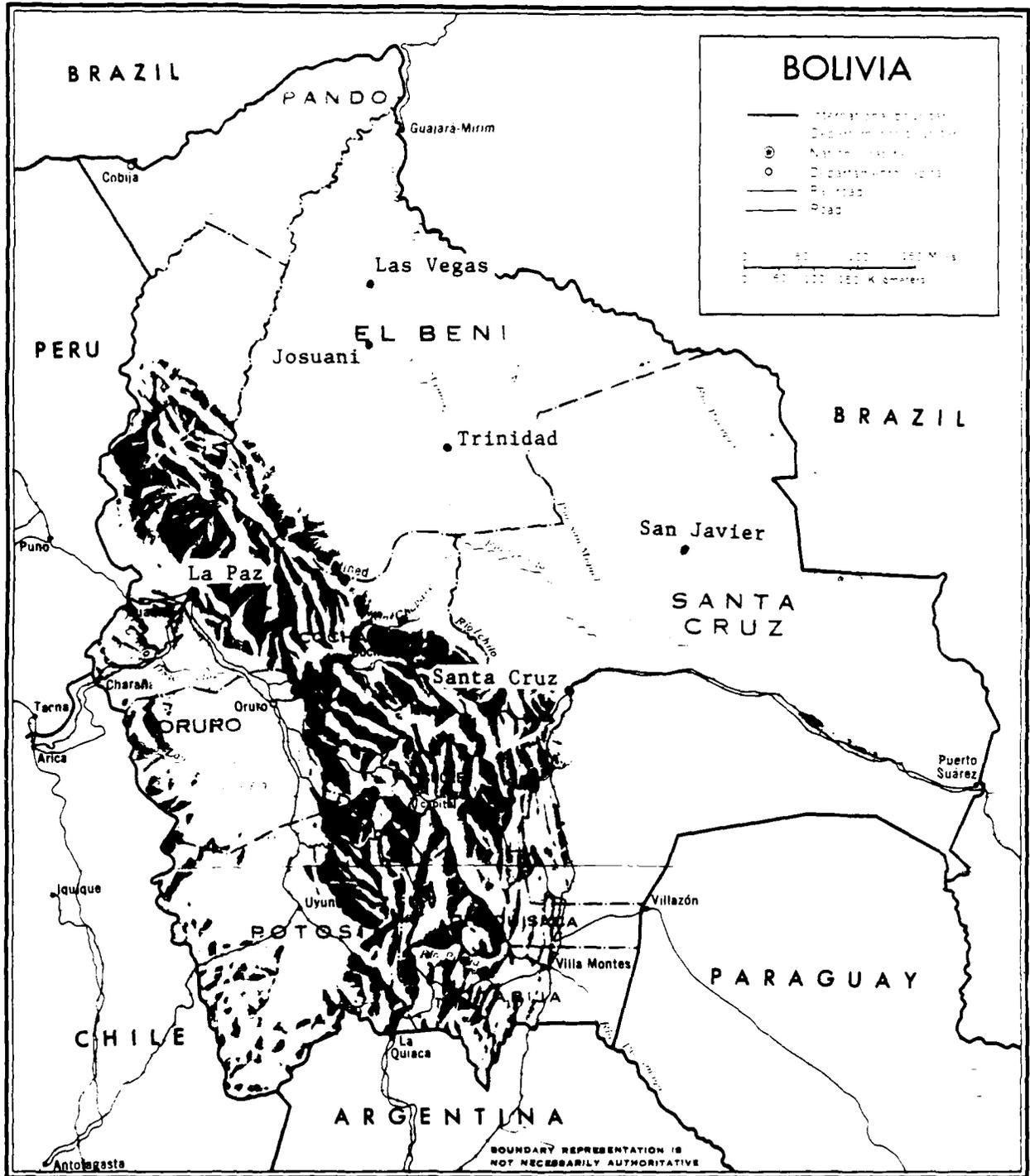
BLAST FURNACE was eventually extended an additional 60 days, making it a total of 4 months before TF Janus closed down in mid-November 1986.

There are many facets of the operation worthy of analysis, particularly if a similar operation were to be conducted in the future. The key focus of BLAST FURNACE in the context of this analysis is to look at indicators which might help answer

questions concerning future roles of the Army in counterdrug programs.

The concept of BLAST FURNACE was to establish a fixed rear operating base (ROB) at the Bolivian Air Force base in Trinidad (See map) and a mobile forward operating base (FOB) from which strike missions were conducted on targets suspected of being potential cocaine laboratories. The helicopter maintenance capability and the intelligence center were located at the ROB while the strike force (three helicopters, Bolivian police, and some DEA agents) worked out of the FOB's of Josuani, Las Vegas, and San Javier during all but the last two weeks of the operation. Some strikes were also conducted from the ROB itself.

By the time BLAST FURNACE had ended in November, TF Janus returned home (most of the personnel and organizations were stationed in Panama, however, some were stationed at Army and Air Force installations in the U.S.) with an aura of pride in having completed a very long, difficult, and successful mission unlike any other that the Army has been called upon to perform in the past. The personnel involved received invaluable, realistic training in air assault operations, logistics, and intelligence analysis and planning. However, was BLAST FURNACE more than a good training exercise? Did it make any difference in the overall scheme of international drug trafficking? Was it the answer to defeating supply-side drugonomics?



A BLAST FURNACE ASSESSMENT

Was BLAST FURNACE a success? That's a necessary question, but it requires defining success. The various departments and agencies of the federal government which deal in drug matters have yet to agree on an acceptable measurement of progress in combatting the illicit drug trade.

If success is defined in terms of BLAST FURNACE's original objective, ie, the disruption of cocaine production in Bolivia for 60 days, then the operation was a resounding success during that short term in which the U.S. military force was physically in country. Evidence of this disruption is the fact that the price of coca leaves fell from \$125 per hundred pounds to \$15, about \$20-25 less than the cost of growing and harvesting the coca leaves. In addition, some 800 traficantes were estimated to have fled the country during that period. On the other hand, as soon as the U.S. military pulled out of Bolivia, the disruption disappeared and the price of coca leaves climbed to a level just short of its pre-BLAST FURNACE price. The disruption of production was short lived and had no apparent long term effect. If success is defined in terms of kilos of cocaine seized and arrests made, then BLAST FURNACE was a failure. There was a tendency, if not a pressure, to fall into a body count mindset as the operation progressed, ie, numbers of labs found became a measurement tool. This pressure could be seen by the fact that mid-way through the operation, the body count enthusiasts began chalking up the discoveries of "transshipment points," locations where coke from perhaps one or more labs was brought for further shipment to another destination, either in or out of country. The "discovery" of a transshipment point was virtually meaningless as it was no more than an isolated airstrip.

The body count method of determining success is probably the least useful (both in the country of origin and in the air/sea/land border interdiction campaign) because the rate of

production of all illegal drug crops continues to increase faster than the rate of interdiction or eradication efforts.

Perhaps one of the key successes of BLAST FURNACE was the resolve and commitment shown by the United States to do something about the drug trade. It demonstrated the ability of the U.S. military, DEA, other U.S. government agencies, and the Bolivian police to cooperate in a successful joint/combined effort to fight drug traffickers, even though it was a short-lived fight.

BLAST FURNACE was also a success in terms of the tremendous training value gained by all elements who participated in the task force operation. The primitive environment and resources available stretched their imagination and ingenuity as they sought ways to make things work in spite of the challenges. The fact that not one Army helicopter mishap occurred throughout the 4 months and 1200 flying hours adds to the successful training and readiness experience.

When TF Janus departed Bolivia, a follow-on effort was put into place whereby U.S. Army instructor pilots and aircraft mechanics began a training program to qualify Bolivian Air Force personnel to fly and to maintain six UH-1 helicopters on loan to Bolivia from the U.S. State Department, then to perform strike operations themselves with UMOPAR and DEA agents. In an interview with Mr. Jeff Biggs, the Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.S. Embassy in La Paz during BLAST FURNACE and prior to BLAST FURNACE when the idea for U.S. military involvement was conceived, he remarked that if the operation could be done over again, the UH-1's should have been provided to Bolivia first, their crews trained prior to the U.S. aviation unit coming in country, so that the Bolivian Air Force could conduct combined strike operations with the U.S., thus leaving behind a more qualified and experienced host nation capability when the U.S. departed.

Mr. Biggs also stated that, to have had a long term effect on the cocaine production, simultaneous strikes against the coca paste labs in the mountainous regions of the Chapare and a total BLAST FURNACE effort extending up to two years would have been

necessary. In the view of this author, this highlights two of the basic problems with U.S. national policy towards countering the drug trade in these countries of origin. First, the resources committed to the effort (people, equipment, dollars) are far too little to have anything but a token or cosmetic effect. Second, the unwillingness to commit to the long term solution may permit a few short term victories but will not win the war. In this light, BLAST FURNACE seems to have been little more than a costly, short term political statement that quickly fell into oblivion because its effect on the international drug trade was virtually nonexistent.

BLAST FURNACE was not without political cost to the government of Bolivia. President Victor Paz Estenssoro received heavy criticism within his own country for having allowed foreign military forces to impose on sovereign Bolivian soil and to conduct "military operations" against Bolivian citizens. Other criticism came from the Organization of American States, Cuba, and other Latin countries.²⁹ The combined pressure on the President was so intense that there was serious concern within the U.S. that the government of Bolivia might topple as a result.³⁰

Corruption is a topic few people want to address openly, but it is a major frustration to all U.S. agencies and organizations involved in combatting the international drug trade. Every DEA agent working anywhere in the world is confronted with this "minefield" as he tries to work with local governments, law enforcement agencies, and militaries in a spirit of "cooperation and common interests." Corruption is easier to talk about than it is to prove in court.

Indicators of corruption were certainly present during BLAST FURNACE. One of those indicators concerned the destruction of cocaine laboratories. If a lab was discovered, the concept was to take out any items which could be used by the UMOPAR, then set fire to the lab. A lab consisted of 10-20 wooden frame structures with canvas tarps and all the food, supplies, and chemicals necessary to sustain life and convert

coca paste into cocaine hydrochloride. A civilian Bolivian prosecutor was required to document the lab and give permission for the UMOPAR to destroy it.

The largest lab discovered, designated target #157 close to the Brazilian border, included some 800 to 1000 barrels of chemicals (many were empty) used in the process of converting coca paste to cocaine. There were so many barrels (ether, acetone, and hydrochloric acid) that an odor of ether hung in the dense jungle and gave headaches to some of the crew members. Destruction of the lab became a matter of attention at the Bolivian Minister of Interior level. There was an expressed concern that a massive fire fueled by all the chemicals might get out of control. A U.S. military EOD (explosive ordnance disposal) team was flown in from Panama, assessed the situation, and assured the U.S. ambassador that a safe, self-contained destruction could be accomplished. Six weeks later, when TF Janus departed Bolivia, permission had still not been given by the Minister of Interior to destroy this choice find.

There were other strong indicators in 1985 when DEA agents and UMOPAR tried to raid cocaine labs using Bolivian Air Force pilots flying one or two Bolivian helicopters. When the pilots were given a target to be struck, they often gave excuses for several days why they could not conduct the mission. Finally, when they did perform the strike, the labs which were found had obviously been abandoned within no more than a day or two. One drug trafficker, in discussing with a U.S. journalist the fact that the U.S. was sending six UH-1 helicopters on long term loan following BLAST FURNACE, remarked, "It's of no concern. The impetus will die with the departure of the Americans. The [Bolivian] military are not committed to fighting this major source of national income."³¹ In another comment, this one by Alex Arteaga, a representative of the National Democratic Action Party in Bolivia's National Congress, the subject of corruption was directed toward the police forces themselves: "There are high level people who make the decisions in the national police that are corrupt, so that information [on upcoming operations] is

going to the narcos" before the raids are made.³² It becomes a difficult task to carry out any kind of counterdrug program in any country where its government, police, and military sometimes seem to be antagonists rather than partners in the effort.

Perhaps a final assessment of BLAST FURNACE lies in the question, "Will there be another similar operation somewhere in the future?" The answer within the community of organizations dealing with drug matters in Washington, to include DOD, lies somewhere between a wishy-washy "unlikely" to an emphatic "No!" There are several reasons why a "son of BLAST FURNACE" will not likely occur again: (1) It is very expensive for the return. (2) It had no real payoff when it was all over. (3) No country is likely to ask the U.S. military to come and play in their backyard because the political price is too heavy.

The DOD's official view of the role of military forces in the drug war is "to provide support so that civilian law enforcement agencies can make the necessary searches, seizures, and arrests."³³

A YEAR AND A HALF AFTER BLAST FURNACE

When TF Janus left Bolivia, mobile training teams came in to train Bolivian Air Force helicopter crews to fly the six UH-1's loaned to them by the U.S. Their subsequent employment in air mobile strike operations against cocaine laboratories has not progressed as well as the U.S. had hoped it would. Nevertheless, there have been a few highly successful strikes in which major labs were discovered and destroyed, arrests were made, and several hundred kilos of cocaine seized.

A U.S. Special Forces team was sent to Bolivia in April 1987 to provide key training to the UMOPAR to increase their capabilities in counterdrug operations. An intelligence specialist from USARSO, Panama was also placed in the U.S. Embassy, La Paz, to continue work with DEA agents.

Unfortunately, there are other indications that the drug war in Bolivia is getting worse rather than better. On 27 October 1986, President Reagan signed public law 99-570, an Anti-Drug Abuse Act which requires the President to certify to Congress that major drug producing and drug cooperating countries fully cooperated with the U.S. during the previous year in taking adequate steps on their own to reduce drug production, trafficking, and money laundering.³⁴ Foreign assistance is directly tied to the certification requirement. The government of Bolivia failed to meet mandated eradication quotas in 1986 and 1987, and, as a result of being decertified, lost \$8.7 million in FY88 security assistance funds and about the same amount in FY87.³⁵ (These funds are unrelated to the INM [International Narcotics Matters - State Dept] funds which continue to be provided specifically for counterdrug programs.)

Another disappointment in Bolivia occurred in July 1987. Thousands of coca growers blocked roads as they staged demonstrations against the government over the presence of the U.S. Special Forces team and the government's efforts to destroy coca plants. The Bolivian government accused traffickers of promoting and financing the demonstrations, nevertheless, the government partially gave in to the Federation of Peasants of the Tropics when it stated that it would focus anti-narcotics efforts on the traffickers rather than the growers.³⁶ This concession assures that the 1986 plan drafted by the Bolivian government to rid their country of cocaine trafficking in 3 years is defunct.

Since BLAST FURNACE, DEA and the other U.S. government organizations which routinely track and seize illegal drug shipments entering the U.S. through the Caribbean Basin are seizing record quantities of cocaine at alarming rates.³⁷ Today, there is a virtual glut of cocaine on the market.

A SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE ARMY INVOLVEMENT

DOD continues to emphasize its "support" role in the counterdrug arena, and in fact, that role has shown some increases. Six additional UH-1's have been offered to State Department (to be distributed two each to Peru, Colombia, and Ecuador) along with pilot training to be conducted by the U.S. Army Aviation School at Ft. Rucker. The Army has been operating 2-3 UH-60's in the Bahamas, carrying Bahamian police and DEA agents to arrest traffickers as they land at remote airstrips. The Georgia National Guard has conducted photo and visual reconnaissance flights with OV-1 aircraft. Air defense HAWK radars from Ft. Bliss, Texas have deployed along the Mexican border from time to time as well as Army engineer units.

Each of these efforts pale in the face of the magnitude of the international drug trade. These final paragraphs offer some suggestions for DOD, and more specifically, Army involvement that could lead to long term, significant impacts in the drug war.

The Army is adept at conducting mission area analyses and has done so for a number of years. Applying that approach to the drug trade, it may be useful to look at the problem from the user all the way to the grower as a means of developing a strategy for using the military services. The drug trade can be impacted at a number of nodes:

1. Education. This includes educating the user and potential user of illegal drugs as to the hazards and consequences of drug use in order to reduce the demand for drugs. It also includes education of the growers in the countries of origin.

2. Identification, arrest, and prosecution of illegal drug users.

3. Identification, arrest, and prosecution of street peddlers and kingpins in the U.S. drug infrastructure.

4. Interdiction (air, land, and sea) of drugs and traffickers between countries of origin and U.S. borders. This

includes international waters and airspace, plus land borders to the north and south.

5. Elimination of the means of drug production, both overseas and within the U.S. This includes finding and destroying drug laboratories and eradication of coca plants, cannabis plants, and opium poppies.

6. Identification, arrest, and prosecution of personnel involved in drug trafficking and money laundering in drug producing and cooperating countries.

A comprehensive drug strategy obviously needs to attack all six of these nodes. The U.S. "National Strategy for Prevention of Drug Abuse and Drug Trafficking" does address these areas. Some nodes appear to have higher payoffs than others. If the demand for drugs could be drastically reduced in the U.S., it would not necessarily reflect a direct reduction of production because other markets would be sought by the traffickers. However, reduction of the demand within the U.S. should be the primary effort in the war on drugs. It must include both educational programs and heavy penalties for those convicted of using and dealing in illicit drugs. This node is not conducive to military involvement.

Most nodes do not lend themselves to U.S. military involvement because they require domestic and international investigative skills, or are simply prohibited under the posse comitatus act. Two nodes do provide opportunities for DOD interaction with other government drug agencies: interdiction on the air, land, and sea borders and elimination of production means in the countries of origin.

A look at the various conveyances used to smuggle illegal drugs into the U.S. further helps to refine the DOD role in

interdiction. The following table reflects those conveyances in terms of percent of volume of drugs actually seized in 1986:³⁸

	<u>Cocaine</u> (%)	<u>Marijuana</u> (%)	<u>Heroin</u> (%)
General Aviation	48	5	-
Commercial Air	11	2	5
Commercial Sea Vessels	13	4	87
Non-Commercial Sea Vessels	23	83	-
Land Transportation	5	6	8

For each of the three major drugs, land transportation accounts for a very small volume seized and should be left to the appropriate civilian agencies (Border Patrol, DEA, Immigration and Customs). Commercial air and sea conveyances account for a fourth of the cocaine and most of the heroin imports. Again, civilian law enforcement agencies are appropriate. Non-commercial watercraft and general aviation account for nearly 3/4 of the cocaine and marijuana imports. This arena is most suitable to Coast Guard, Navy, and Air Force participation with civilian law enforcement agencies. The surveillance, early warning, and intercept requirements of an air and sea drug interdiction program are aligned with wartime missions and capabilities of these services and present a training opportunity for them.

The elimination of the means of production is the arena where the Army can most appropriately contribute. However, that does not mean the introduction of combat units into the sovereignty of a foreign country, as was done in Bolivia.

The drug infrastructure in a major producing country must not be thought of as a criminal problem affecting private citizens and given simply to the responsibility of police forces. Rather, it must be viewed like an insurgency, targeting the very security of the nation itself and given to the combined responsibility of the government, police, and military forces to combat it. The corruptive influence on government, coupled with the physical threat against government, fully justifies the

development of a counterinsurgency-type approach. Colombia is fighting a losing battle against drug trafficking because of the terrorist activity directed against every element of its government. Bolivia is fighting a losing battle because of the financial influence the traffickers maintain over the peasant growers and the infiltration of drug corruption throughout various levels of the government. The drug infrastructure is an insurgent, not a criminal problem.

The U.S. Army's participation in the war on drugs must be in the security assistance role. There are, of course, obstacles to this approach. One is the nightmare of the Vietnam experience which "seems to loom large in the national subconscious, making the public nervous about any future commitments."³⁹ The security assistance program established in El Salvador still brings out the Vietnam fears in many people today.

A second obstacle, closely related to that just mentioned, is the reluctance of the American people, if not the government itself, to get entangled in a long term problem, one that cannot be solved overnight by throwing a lump sum of money at it. Eradication of drug production will require staying for the long count. Anything less than total commitment will simply result in short term suppression, not elimination.

A third obstacle is the cost. Security assistance programs throughout Latin America have been on a decreasing trend over the past several years. Presently, only three countries receive any security assistance in all of Latin America: El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala. A counterdrug security assistance program would require big bucks be programmed within the Military Assistance Program, the International Military Education and Training program, and the Economic Support Fund to be effective. Such programs would also require the commitment of congressional appropriations committees over the long term.

If the U.S. government considers the "war on drugs" to be more than just political rhetoric (That's a big if), it must make major efforts to decrease demand (education) and to decrease supply (interdiction and eradication). It should use its

diplomatic powers to negotiate the simultaneous initiation of comprehensive security assistance programs to counter drug trafficking in the three major producing countries in this hemisphere: Colombia, Mexico, and Bolivia. Peru should not be ignored, but its Soviet influence may make it more difficult to establish such a program in that country.

The type of security assistance programs to be developed requires imagination and should not be bound by traditional thinking. In the January 1988 edition of Military Review, COL Richard H. Taylor said that "military operations short of war do not mean business as usual."⁴⁰ This statement is equally applicable to the development of a counterdrug security assistance program. It must be built upon an interagency community unlike any other organization, incorporating military, police, intelligence, investigative, agricultural, political, civil affairs, information media, and PSYOPS organizations all with a common purpose: destroy the drug infrastructure and its means of producing illicit drugs while substituting other means of livelihood for the affected peasant growers.

The Army needs to play a key role in this effort, far beyond simply "supporting law enforcement agencies." Security assistance programs are traditionally the responsibility of the State Department. However, the Army should appropriately be the operating agency in the program being suggested because of its capabilities in the areas of planning, logistics, and C3I (command, control, communications, intelligence).

The intelligence community, both military and government, can play a significant role in breaking up a drug infrastructure. The following comment concerning the importance of military intelligence in a low intensity conflict environment is also valid in a counterdrug security assistance approach:

"In LIC, where the enemy avoids direct confrontation and where he may be trying to avoid U.S. forces altogether by waiting out their withdrawal, MI becomes a key means for maintaining momentum. By seeking out key insurgent leaders

and agitators and identifying supply points and base areas, MI is the key to keeping the enemy off balance and preempting his plan of action."⁴¹

The security assistance program must include training programs for both police (presently unauthorized under U.S. laws) and military forces alike. Both military and civilian equipment may need to be provided such as aircraft, riverine boats, secure communications, radars, night vision devices, etc.

Investigative and intelligence resources must be teamed to identify drug corruption where possible and allow the U.S. Ambassador and his representatives to use their diplomatic channels to communicate that information to appropriate levels. Ethics and integrity within the officer corps of the military and police forces must be addressed where that may be found to be a problem, as it continues to be addressed in El Salvador.

Civil affairs and PSYOPS teams can work with host nation media to try to mobilize support against the drug infrastructure and for the government. Drug crop eradication efforts must combine the resources of the intelligence community, police forces and military. Crop duster aircraft must be made available to enact an effective eradication program and may even need to be armed.

Periodic combined joint military training exercises, as are now conducted in Ecuador, Bolivia, Panama, and have been conducted in the past with Colombia, could be planned in these countries where counterdrug security assistance programs are recommended. The exercises could be built around a counterdrug scenario and include combined operations against production means for a two week duration. This cannot become a substitute for a solid security assistance program but may be a useful supplement to one.

The security assistance approach need not and should not be limited to a U.S. initiative. The drug trade is an international cancer that knows no bounds. There are a number of organizations within the United Nations that work in narcotics concerns: the

U.N. Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC), the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), the International Criminal Police Organization (ICPO - Interpol), and the Division on Narcotics Drugs (DND). These organizations should be encouraged to work with the U.S. in creating international counterdrug security assistance programs.

SUMMARY

The influence of the international drug traffickers, along with their terrorist supporters, is clearly a threat to the national security interests of producing, supporting, and using countries alike. It breeds corruption at every level of government and society; it crosses every ethnic, social, and financial boundary without preference.

The solutions are not easy, but the alternative of not solving the problem is unacceptable. The U.S. must come to grips with this threat and attack it at every level. The economy of force approach in dollars and people will never make a difference. Commitment to the long haul solution cannot be avoided. U.S. military forces have the potential to contribute much more to the fight while enhancing training rather than degrading readiness. BLAST FURNACE was an effort to do something and was perhaps derived out of the frustration of watching the drug trade continue to increase in spite of other government efforts to curb it. It was only a short lived success, but it did generate a lot of thought across interagency boundaries concerning future counterattacks in the U.S. war on drugs.

ENDNOTES

1. Caption is paraphrased.
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3. Ibid.
4. Interview with Ron Merriott, Lt. Col., USAF, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, Washington, 3 Dec 1987.
5. State, Narcotics Affairs, App B, p. 3.
6. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of International Narcotics Matters, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, March 1987, p. 10. (hereafter referred to as "State, Narcotics Control Strategy").
7. State, Narcotics Affairs, p. 4.
8. Ibid.
9. "White Powder War," Soldiers, Nov 1986, pp. 14-20.
10. State, Narcotics Control Strategy, p. 19.
11. Ibid., p. 3.
12. Interview with Craig Coy, CDR, USN, Office of the Attorney General, National Drug Policy Board, Washington, 24 Nov 1987.
13. State, Narcotics Control Strategy, p. 14.
14. Ibid., p. 15 and interview with Fabio Zapata, LTC, Colombian Air Force, Commander of Colombian Helicopter Forces, 13 May 1986.
15. Interview with Coy.
16. "Army Blackhawks in Bolivia: US Cracks Down on Cocaine," Soldier of Fortune, June 1987, pp. 62-65.
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19. National Narcotics Border Interdiction System (NNBIS), "Seminar on How to Maximize Access to Military Resources," Washington, 26 October 1987.b

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26. Interview with Jeff Biggs, former Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy, La Paz, Washington, 3 Dec 1987.

27. Interview with Dave Westrate, Deputy Director, Drug Enforcement Administration, 18 Nov 1987.

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41. John F. Stewart, BG, "Military Intelligence Operations in Low-Intensity Conflict: An Organizational Model," Military Review, p. 25.

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